— facilitating through bilateral consultations, the rapid utilisation in the form of export of goods and services of debt owed to Russia;

— promotion of direct business contact through exchange of delegations, Joint Business Councils, holding of exhibitions, participation in fairs etc.

The Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between India and Russian Federation which was signed on May 4, 1992 provides the basic framework for Indo-Russian trade and economic cooperation since the disintegration of the former USSR. The utilisation of the Russian rupee debt fund is governed by the Arrangement between the Bank For Foreign Economic Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Reserve Bank of India for implementing the provisions of the letters dated 28-29 January, 1993 and 6 September, 1993 exchanged between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of India. As per this Arrangement, the funds related to the payment of the Russian rupee debt are to be utilized for purchase of goods and services from India. Our exports to Russia are moving largely on debt repayment track as well as in a small measure, under hard currency.

Imposition of Duty Tariff on Rice imported from Pakistan

1868. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has received any representation from the All India Rice Exporters' Association (AIREA) for imposing 55 per cent duty tariff on broker rice imported from pakistan, presently at zero tariff;

(b) if so, the reasons assigned by the AIREA in favour of this demand; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken thereon?

MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) AIREA has proposed an imposition of a duty of 40-50% on imported 50% and above broken rice aiming to protect the rice industry so that our brokens get a right price allowing Indian head rice prices to be competitive in the international market.

(c) The import of rice during the last three years is as under:—

Year	Quantity(MT)	Value (Rs.Lakhs)
1997-98	54	6.16
1998-99	6213	568.96
1999-2000 (Apr.—Nov., 1999)	2190	364.72

Source: DGCI&S, Calcutta.

The above imports are insignificant when compared to our production. The concerned Department has been directed to step up inspections to verify/ ensure that the varieties being imported are only common/coarse and that the broken percentage are 50% or more.

Wokers Affected by closure of Tea Gardens in Darjeeling

1869. SHRI DAWA LAMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) how many workers and employees have been affected by closure of Pashok, Vah Tukvar and Potong Tea Estates of Darjeeling (Garden-wise);

(b) the amount of dues payable to them by TTCI on account of different heads (salary, bonus, PF, Gratuity); and

(c) what action Government propose for revival of the gardens?

MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) the number of workers and employees of non-functional Pashok and Vah Tukvar tea estates are as under:—

Pashok — 959

Vah Tukvar — 747

Potong tea estate with a strength of 344 workers/employees is in operation.

(b) The amount outstanding for payment to employees and/or other concerned agencies for Pashok, Vah Tukvar and Potong tea estates is provisionally estimated around Rs. 6.75 crores.

(c) Tea Trading Corporation of India Ltd. which is a wholly owned subsidiary of STC is facing an acute financial crunch being a loss making Company and has been unable to discharge its obligations. The total liability of the Company is estimated around Rs. 36 crores as on 31.1.1997.